



**United States Department of State**

*Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs*

*Washington, D.C. 20522*

January 30, 2026

Dear Specialist:

Welcome to the U.S. Department of State's BridgeUSA Exchange Visitor Program! This is the beginning of one of the most important and exciting adventures of your life. During your time in the United States, you will observe an American institution and methods of practice in your professional field and share your specialized knowledge with your American colleagues. You will make friendships that will last a lifetime and partake in American traditions. Since 1949, thousands of specialists from around the world have come to share their language, culture, and customs with their American colleagues and the broader local community. Your participation in this exchange program fosters a greater understanding between our two countries and works towards peaceful relations throughout the world.

We want you to have a meaningful and successful experience. We hope you learn about American customs, values, and culture, and build strong relationships with your new American specialists, scholars, professors, and friends. You will be providing expertise in an attending school/university or organization, which may have different rules and ways of life from what you are used to, so keeping an open mind will be important to your success.

Your U.S. sponsor is your first point of contact throughout your stay in the United States. Their information is identified on your Form DS-2019, Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor Program (J-1) Status. If you have any questions about your exchange program or need assistance of any kind while you are here, immediately contact your U.S. sponsor. It is their responsibility to help you with any problems, needs, or concerns you may have. Their emergency telephone contact number can be found in your program orientation materials and identification card, and is available to you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Add this phone number to your contact list.

If you have concerns and/or issues that your U.S. sponsor has not resolved, or you find you cannot reach your sponsor, please contact the Department of State through

our J-1 Visa Emergency Helpline 1-866-283-9090, which is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, or by e-mail at [JVisas@state.gov](mailto:JVisas@state.gov). Please add the helpline number and the email address to your contacts to ensure you receive important communications from the Department. Your sponsor and the Department of State are here to ensure your success and safety on the program.

We are pleased that you made the decision to study in the United States and hope you enjoy your stay.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rebecca A. Pasini". The signature is written in a cursive style with some capital letters.

Rebecca A. Pasini  
Deputy Assistant Secretary  
for Private Sector Exchange